

College Athlete NIL Litigation, Case No. 4:20-cv-03919

The Honorable Claudia Wilkin,

I am kindly writing to you on behalf of myself and my teammates here at the University of Notre Dame—specifically, the 35 walk-ons who proudly make up WOPU (Walk-On Player Union). We are not on scholarship and were not top recruits. We love Notre Dame enough to pay for the chance to contribute to this program, rather than get paid. We are the guys who grew up dreaming of playing college football and wearing the gold helmet. Being part of this program was mine, and the rest of my WOPU brothers lifelong dream.

We are the ones who show up every day, not for glory, recognition, or NIL deals. We show up simply because we believe in the team, love this school, and are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of something that is bigger than ourselves. We do whatever is needed to prepare our brothers for the Saturdays in the fall. We are the scout team, take the hits, and mimic the opponents' offense and defense. We do not do it for recognition. When it comes down to it, we are the heart of this program.

If the proposed settlement goes through as-is, it means that I could be cut. I would be left with two undesirable options, leave my dream university where I invested so much time and energy or stay and watch from the sidelines as my eligibility quietly disappears, essentially forcing me to choose between student or athlete. It feels like everything I have worked for is being taken away, not because of merit, but because of the decisions of a few who prioritize money over people.

We understand the landscape is shifting and NIL is changing the game. We are not saying that similar changes should not be made in the future, but to be forced out like this, without a transition plan and without a voice, is devastating and wrong. Those who are opposing a grandfather clause are turning their backs on the very players who give their programs life. It's lazy, cruel, and unnecessary. That's why I'm writing to you to ask—please don't settle. Please don't give in. Fight for us.

Respectfully and Hopefully,

Alex Whitman

University of Notre Dame Football #86